

LAMPREY HEALTH CARE

Where Excellence and Caring go Hand in Hand

January 9, 2017

Senator Bradley
State House, Room 302
107 N. Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

RE: Commission to Evaluate the Effectiveness and the Future of the Premium Assistance Program

Dear Senator Bradley and Commission Members:

Thank you for allowing Lamprey Health Care the opportunity to speak to you on the impact of the New Hampshire Health Protection Program and the Premium Assistance Program. Lamprey Health Care is a federally qualified health center with locations in Nashua, Raymond, and Newmarket. We currently serve approximately 16,000 patients at our three locations: 25% are Medicaid patients, 13% are Medicare, 44% are commercially insured, and 18% are uninsured. Roughly one quarter of our commercially insured patients are enrollees in the New Hampshire Health Protection Program's Premium Assistance Program. Like all health centers, we serve our patients regardless of ability to pay or insurance status.

Since the beginning of the New Hampshire Health Protection Program, the number of our uninsured patients decreased over 20% across our three sites. These patients are now enrolled in Medicaid and in commercial plans through the New Hampshire Protection Program and Premium Assistance Program. The New Hampshire Health Protection Program provides many of our patients who were previously uninsured the necessary health care coverage to manage chronic diseases, afford laboratory services outside of our health center, and access behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment. We have seen an increase in the number of patients no longer delaying necessary care due to an inability to pay. Instead, they access care primary and preventive care at our health center rather than presenting at an emergency department for acute illnesses.

As patients shifted when and how they access primary and preventive care, our health center adapted to the demand by expanding our office hours, adding additional providers and staff, and adding additional services. In addition, as a result of the number of insured patients increasing, the amount of charity care provided to the uninsured decreased. Most importantly, the people in the communities that we serve have better access to health insurance coverage, can better afford health care, and can take better care of their health as a result.

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If the New Hampshire Health Protection Program ended, Lamprey Health Care would likely no longer be able to support the staff or services necessary to treat these patients at the same capacity. Further, patients currently insured through the Program would likely revert to being uninsured, resulting in a loss of collections that represent over 7% of our patient revenue. Not only will patients lose crucial access to care, including substance use treatment, our workforce and community will be negatively affected through a loss of employment and a decrease in access to services during an opioid epidemic.

I invite all of you to tour one of our three health centers to see the impact the New Hampshire Health Protection Program has on our patients' lives. Please feel free to contact to me if you have any further questions or to schedule a visit to one of our clinics.

Sincerely,

Gregory White
Chief Executive Officer